The Two most Alarming Malaise of our Country -

VIOLENCE AND TYRANNY

By

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INTRODUCTION

The following speech was delivered by Maulana Syed Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi on 6th January, 1993 at Baradari, Lucknow, at a select gathering of religious and political leaders of different denominations. The hall was packed to capacity and the audience numbering 10 to 12 thousand spilled outside the Baradari.

It may be recalled that the meeting was held one month after the Ayodhya tragedy and the resultant riots at different places were fresh in the minds of the speaker and the audience both. The speech has, therefore, been delivered from the depth of his heart and reflects his intense feelings as an aftermath of double tragedy. It is an appeal to concerned citizens for sanity and it is hoped that they will respond to it in a befitting manner and save the country from sliding further into moral chaos.

Lucknow :
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Qazi Abdul Hameed

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Gentlemen,

I would like to begin my speech with a couplet of a renowned poet of Lucknow, the city of gardens. Those in the audience who are interested in literature and poetry must be conversant with his name.

Amīr, friends have gathered, pour your heart to them.

For this kindness of the friends' heart may or may not abide.

I will also recite another couplet of an illustrious poet and litterateure, philosopher and thinker of the sub-continent 'Allama Iqbal, He says :

That thou wake-up, I have heaved a sigh
Though love is and has been expressed without sighs.

(It means : you should wake-up because a painful cry has come out of my heart. Otherwise love is such that it is expressed without cries and lamentations and it has been done so all along).

Gentlemen,

I may say, with apologies, that I have a literary bent of mind and the two subjects of my special study are comparative study of religions and history - not of any particular country or an era, but history of the world. I have studied and gone through a number of books in Arabic, Persian and English. I have reached

the conclusion, after all this study, that the point on which all the religions of the world are unanimous is that tyranny is ruinous and it is disliked by the Creator of the universe. So far as history is concerned it tells us that at times tyranny has led vast empires to their downfall; flourishing civilizations have been annihilated; some were totally wiped out and all their literary treasures were destroyed.

There are many such instances in history when the anguished sigh of a grieved person and the painful cry of a distressed woman has been enough to annihilate an era. The most important factor for the welfare of the countries is that there should be no tyranny, however developed the country may be and glorious its past history, or vast and inexhaustible its resources. No weak person should be tyrannised, no bread-winner be killed, no woman be molested and no curse of the oppressed be invited.

I say that if some people try to demolish this small building (in which the meeting is being held) which is nothing compared to the sprawling city of Lucknow, break its furniture and all the articles of decoration and assault the people present here, then its trustees or guards will not tolerate it. If somebody goes to the potter's shop - what standing a potter has in society and what value his earthen wares have and start breaking them, he will not come unscathed from there. The potter will do his best to stop and protect his wares. If somebody enters a shop and ransacks or robs it, the shopkeeper will stop him with all his might. He will not tolerate this plunder. If the people in the locality

are educated and cultured, the entire locality will stop its normal activity and come out and stop him and if the conditions permit, ask him as to what is the fault of the shopkeeper that he is pillaging his merchandise or setting it on fire. There is a library close to this place (Amiruddaula Library). I value its collections and have taken advantage of its books and most of my writings are based on the material I got from it. If somebody enters it and starts tearing or damaging its books, though these books have been written by men and can be re-written or published again, yet nobody will allow him to destroy this valuable collection.

Then has man alone has been left to be killed? Or one's fellow-men are there to be murdered? Man who inhabits this country, man who is the pride of the nation and on account of whom this region is called a civilized society and not a jungle and nobody thinks of going there for hunting, becaue everybody knows that it is Lucknow, the centre of a culture; it is Ayodhya; it is Delhi, a historical city and the capital of the country. It is Bombay; it is Surat; it is Ahmedabad. How long I will recount the names of these cities. No potter would allow anybody to break his earthen wares or a glass blower his glass wares. How then some people think that man who has been created by the Creator of this vast universe with love and who is the best of His creations can be hunted down and that too by his own neighbours and fellow-citizens like the wild animals are hunted.

The crux of the matter is that all the religions agree that tyranny is ruinous. It invites the wrath of the

Creator of the universe; such horrible chastisement and calamities and afflictions visit those places that a man shudders at the very thought of them. I do not like to say all this as I belong to this country and my life is linked with it. But I must warn that Almighty God inflicts His vengeance on the oppressors, thunders and earth-quakes strike such a place. It is visited by famines and pestilence.

I warn you again that tyranny is to be feared most and that all the religions and reformers, saints and sufis agree that man is the most valuable living being on earth. He may profess any religion or belong to any society, nation or race and even though he may not be useful to the society - he is the creation of God, he is the personification of His Mercy.If we do not call him a masterpiece then what else can be called by that name.

There are times when a man falls ill, he is afflicted with fits of hysteria or madness, and this happens to societies and nations also besides the individuals. History tells us that these fits of bloodshed and tyranny, hate and hostility have not attacked individuals alone but entire societies and countries. It is nothing new or surprising, But what is feared is that there should be no one to remedy or fight against them. We have known such terrific fits smiting the entire human race and civilization. It was then feared that everything existing would be laid waste. But men of courage came forward and changed the course of history. There are many such instances in history and I can cite not one but many instances in the light of my study.

I would, however, cite two such instances : one of it was when the Tartar hordes marched out of Mangolia, on the borders of China. It was, then feared that no trace of the age old civilization will be left. It will have to start its journey anew. Everything will be destroyed. There will be no libraries, no schools, no intellectuals and no literate persons. The fear complex was so widespread that even the people in Europe were mighty afraid of the Tartars although they were far away from the scene. I will quote a few examples from authentic books by European authors.

> *"The Latin world was darkened by this cloud of savage hostility; a fugitive carried the alarm to Sweden and the remote nations of the Baltic and the Ocean trembled at the approach of the Tartars, whom their fear and ignorance were inclined to separate from the human species."*
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> Edward Gibbon, Decline and Fall of Roman Empire, Vol. III; p. 634, 2nd.Ed. London 1909.

> *"A prophetic amateur of history surveying the world in the opening of seventh century might have concluded very reasonably that it was only a question of a few centuries before the whole of Europe and Asia fell under the Mangolian domination."*
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> H.G. Wells, A Short History of the World London, 1924, p.144.

"...... so devastating was his impact upon civilization that virtually a new beginning had to be made in half the world. The empires of Cathay, of Prester John of Black Cathay, of Kharasm, and after his death the Caliphate of Baghdad, of Russia and for a while the principalities of Poland ceased to be ...."

Herold Lamb. Chenghis Khan, London, 1928 pp.11-12

But what happened - A few sufis and saints came out of their seclusion, they met them, reminded them of the retribution of Almighty God, put a little fright in their hearts and advised them to show mercy to the innocent people and won their hearts. Their winsome talk softened the attitude of the Tartars and they relented. These sufis and saints were so unmindful of power and pelf and so sincere in their mission that except for a few of them we do not find their names anywhere in the books of history. They concealed their identity. They converted Tartar brutes into fine specimen of mankind who then produced men of letters, law-givers and just rulers. They turned out to be promoters of civilization and world leaders for centuries to come.

Dear Brothers,

Kindly excuse me if I say this hysterical fit often attacks a particular sect, a community, a school of thought, a country, a civilization and at times it affects an entire era. It is not surprising. What is suprising

it that no party and no society stands up and tries to. instil human values, stop the oppression and senseless bloodshed and tries to inculcate love for fellow-beings, true patriotism, nationalism and love for the country. Those persons who have studied philosophy of history and religions, who have gone through the biographies of spiritual leaders, know that these fits do occur. They are sometimes in the form of worship of mammon, sexualism, sadism or misanthropy. Such perverse persons do not enjoy normal recreations nor derive pleasure in a melody as they do in a murder. This is sinking to the lowest depths of baseness and going down to the lowest levels of meanness. But man suffers from it. History is replete with such instances of mad frenzy. We see a nation oppressing another nation and a state overpowering another state and some people contriving new methods of torture. But all that lies buried in the dark corners of archives. It seemed as if the wrath of God had visited the people who would never prosper. They would not be able to hold their head high again. Their children would not get proper education nor their women-folk will live with respect.

But all of a sudden a wind of change blew and a restorative breeze of humanity covered the entire area and a new spirit of sacrifice developed in the people. They neither cared for their status in society nor health nor honour nor lives. The atmosphere of fear disappeared. The people who had lost their senses and took delight in killing became the protectors of human lives, plunderers turned protectors and killers became healers.

There is also a time when parents do not feel happy to see their children. This is the situation oftentimes at some places even these days; instead of a sparkle of love, tears come out of the eyes of the parents when they think what will happen to them tomorrow, when a fit of hysteria may attack someone and he might kill the innocent children in cold blood in their own presence. It is shameful that a man may not be happy to see his children who are the light of his eyes; when he fears that the innocent children might be killed, the women might be molested and even orphans and widows might not be shown any mercy, but massacred. It is a malaise. It is against human nature and the Will of the Creator, the teachings of the prophets and reformers. But it does happen and it has to be said albeit with a heavy heart that such ghastly incidents are recorded in history. The younger generations read them and wonder who were those persons, to which caste and creed they belonged! What had happened to them? How they fell down in the fit of hysteria? What had happened to their human feelings? Had they lost the balance of mind? Had they no feelings of pity to see a person writhing in pain? Why were they not moved to tears at blood being shed? But no, they were such hard-hearted that they could see men bleeding but tears never rolled from their eyes. Since they judged others by their religion and not religion alone but on the basis of biased history and fictitious stories of the past hundreds of years were fresh in their memories, became oblivious of the Ever-Living and Eternal God and His retribution. They were oblivious

of their brethren who are prospering in the world, who are creating master-pieces, writing classics and who are still capable of greater achievements. Man occupies the central place in this universe, it is because of him the world has its charm and attraction. If one goes to the grave-yard he would not like to stay there. If, again, he goes to a zoo or museum he will have no heart to be there for long, though it is full of rare animals or exquisite and classic sculptures, etc. He would not like to stay there, he will have a look a these collections and come out. But living in a society, he never gets tired. If he has to pass through a jungle he is afraid and prays that he may get through it safely and meet his fellow-beings. If a man has no love for another man, if a man does not feel hurt at the misery of another man, if a man has no sympathy for fellow-men, then he is not a man, but a brute. There is no one who likes a brute and no one who does not hate him. But I ask you; why do you not hate the man who turns a brute? There will be no one in this assembly who will ask me why I am dialating at such length on the wickedness of a brute. But why are you not distressed when a man becomes a brute? Why do you not feel hurt and express your hatred at it when you see it happening before your eyes? Man has been created to be an angel, sufi and a saint. He has been taught to be sympathetic towards his fellow-men. He has been given the high status of being the best of creations. He has been eulogised in our poetry and talked about in the same way in our meetings and conferences. But a brute is a brute. I have never known any poet having

written an ode in praise of a brute. made him a hero and an ideal. We detest snakes and scorpions, wolves and tigers, but when some people degrade themselves to such beastliness, we do not feel ashamed.

I fail to understand how a man assaults an innocent way-farer? We must take that man to a psychiatrist and find out why he behaved in the manner he did? Man has been created to stop oppression. Wherever man is oppressed we must stop it with all our might, whether he belongs to United States, Europe or Africa, be it at home or in the street. The well-known poet Maulana Hali has said :

Dard-e-dil ke waste paida kiya insān ko,
Warna ta'at ke liye kuchh kum na the kirro-biyan,

(Man has been created to feel pain (for others) otherwise there was no dearth of angels for worship Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) has said :

"God showers His mercy on those who show mercy to others,
He is merciful, if you are merciful to others on earth, He will be Merciful to you in heaven.

Maulana Hali has ably translated the holy Prophet's (peace be on him) utterance in this couplet

(Karo mehrabani tum ahle zamīn par
Khuda mehraban hoga 'Arsh-e-Barin par)

(You be kind to man on earth
God will be kind to you on the Empyrean).

There is, however, nothing to be disheartened at the present conditions. The need of the hour is that our religious leaders and intellectuals should come out.

and stop anti-social elements from creating mischief and tell them to maintain the honour of the country and not to damage its image. Be man and behave like gentleman and love each other. The pleasure of life lies in that a man is happy to see another man, tries to know him and harbour a hope that if any misfortune befells him, the other man will come to his help. It is real life. It is partriotism and it is politics. It is also politics that all the people may live together as one big family.

Gentlemen,

I want to say that a fit of hysteria has attacked some of our countrymen. It is a fit of madness and exploitation of religion and sentiments. It is temporary and it will pass, but it is necessary that there should be persons to ameliorate these worsening conditions. The work needs sympathisers and men with a large-heart, who may come out without any thought of personal comforts, who may move from place to place in groups and take the message of peace and amity to people in the interest of the country and for the sake of sanity and humanity. They should ask the countrymen to calm down and stop all those activities which spoil the fair name of the country and get busy in constructive works for the advancement of the country that may bring a good name to it and enhance the status of the country. It has earned a very bad name which it never had in its entire history. It is now looked down upon as never before. We all share the ignominy. Hindus and Muslims are all Indians and God-willing, will remain so. The country and its composite culture,

its history and its civilization are dear to us. The Muslims have decided to stay here. There were many places for them to go, but they did not leave it. The administration, educational institutions, the Police and the Press should discharge their responsibilities with fair-mindedness.

There are three principal sections in any society, the education, the police and the media. If they function properly there will be no fit of hysteria and no threat to the society. When a youngman will come out of a college, he will have light of knowledge, he will have respect for his fellowmen. Then comes police, which may imbibe the spirit of service and cooperate with the citizens. I have visited several foreign countries. There one feels at ease with the police. It is regarded as a helper and a guide. It happened with me once. I asked the whereabouts of a friend from a cop. But later I felt sorry for having asked him. He not only directed me but walked with me to that place. The police there is meant to see that nobody is ill-treated. It helps the weak and guides the strangers. The English people had come here from a distant land. They created the police as an agency to overawe the local subjects. But what is the need of such behaviour now? The common man should feel confident to see the police. If anybody was in trouble or the women and children in a locality were facing a dangerous situation they should feel relieved to see the police which should help them. I again say, at the cost of repitition that if the educational institutions, the police and the press perform their functions properly everything will be all

right. The unhappy and ugly incidents which have come to pass in our country in the recent past, would then never occur. We should not be unnerved by these fits of hysteria. It is life and there are ups and downs. But the real cause for worry would be if there were no patriotic, sympathetic and law-abiding groups of persons or parties or organizations to deal with these symptoms. The country may be very prosperous and very rich and flowing with milk and honey, the people may be getting their daily bread without much efforts but we cannot rest content till the relations between the people are cordial and there is mutual trust and confidence in between them.

Why one should be upset to see another man? We may be afraid of snakes and scorpions, wolves and tigers, but not of man. Has man been created to kill another man ? There are many more things for man to care for.

It was not an easy task to free India. British Empire was quite extensive. It was said that sun never sets in the British Empire. It was a dream that India would be free. **But when Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Maulana Muhammad Ali and the Nehru family gave the call to boycott the British goods, the Hindus and Muslims who loved the country stood as one man in those fateful days inspite of having different religious and cultures and sometimes speaking different languages**. I was then quite young. I have heard Mahatma Gandhi and Motilal Nehru in Aminabad Park. We had personal relations with Maulana Azad. They together made possible what

appeared to be impossible. If anybody had then predicted that India would be free so soon, he would have been asked to go for mental check-up. Doubts would have been raised about his being in senses. Who could oust the English people? **But it was Hindu-Muslim unity, their patriotism and love of the country which forced the English people to quit India.**

In the post-independence era Mahatma Gandhi and Maulana Azad presented three essential principles for the welfare of this country. Maulana Azad was very enthusiastic advocate of these three principles and so long we stick to these, the country would remain peaceful and prosperous.

They are secularism, democracy and non-violence. They are necessary for the country to survive and remain united. I want that scholars and historians should take a note of it that these three principles are the destiny of India and nobody can change that destiny. The Hindus, Muslims, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs and Christians will live in this country. If it were not so, why the Muslims came from outside, why opportunities were provided for them by God? India can survive only as a secular country. An Arab poet has said that if fire does not get anything to burn, it burns itself. I say very clearly that if you take over the holy places of the Muslims, then God forbid, this conflict will enter the Hindu community also. There are backward classes, Jains and Buddhists who would demand that their places of worship be restored to them. Shankaracharya converted Buddhist temples into Hindu temples in the eighth century. I have been to Nalanda and I have seen

the Buddhist University which has been excavated, I have seen many places where Jain and Buddhist temples have gone over to Hindus. I had written to late Shri Rajiv Gandhi and all his predecessors that do not allow the history to turn back. These letters have been published. It will be a great mistake to move backward. We should march forward. There is no time and the life is short. We have lot of resources and there are ample opportunities. Why then waste our energies and talent on these non-issues ? We must take the country forward and not backward. If we just keep rehearsing the past, there will be no time for constructive work. There will then be such worse conditions that no charm will be left in life. The country will earn an ill-repute. Its past glory will be finished. The heroes and thinkers and philosophers it had produced, will be consigned to the oblivion. The only thing remembered will be that India is a country where men are burnt alive, where men are chopped to pieces, where men are sawed in saw machines and where children are thrown out of running trains or dashed against the wall. These things are never liked by God.

We may reach the moon and other planets. Prof. C.E.M. Joad who was Head of the Department of Philosophy in London University has written about an incident with an Indian Philosopher. Perhaps he refers to Dr. Radhakrishnan. He says that when his colleagues recounted to him the marvels of science, he listened patiently but quietly replied, "Yes, you have learnt to fly like birds and swim like fishes, but have you learnt

to walk on earth like man!" Late Dr. Zakir Husain once quoted someone in a meeting in which I happened to be present. He said, "Every child that comes to the world proves that God is still not disappointed of man." But our actions these days prove that we are sorely disappointed. I request you to have faith in man. He has been given a heart which no creation has been given. Being a religious-minded man and follower of a religion I can say that angels have not been given that heart, which God has given to man. Man feels pain for others, grieves at the miseries and misfortunes of his fellow-men, his heart sinks at the sufferings of another man and he sheds tears and prays and entreats before God for them. Man is to be respected, but he is being killed, helpless women and innocent children are oppressed. What happened in Ahmedabad, Bombay and Surat. One shudders as he thinks of orgy of death and destruction, perpetrated at those and other places: I visit so many places and I have friends all over the country. I cannot describe what happened at those places naked ladies were paraded in the streets, they were molested and then killed. It does not befit any religious morality. It is against common-sense. It is against the traditions of India. We seldom realise how India was held in high regard in foreign countries; the high place it enjoyed in their estimation. India produced such pious persons that if I recount their names, it will make a long list. In the end I want to tell you and do please take a note of it that this disease is not to be afraid of, what we should worry about is the lack of kindhearted persons which is ruinous for any society

and country. The humanity has survived greater catastrophes in the past on account of such noble souls. First of all it is due to the Prophets (peace be on all of them), sufis and saints and then the people who had a sympathetic heart, who gave up their homes and comforts to save the common man from miseries, to save innocent men from being oppressed or killed. They suffered hunger, passed sleepless nights risked their lives and put the society on an evey keel. Our country needs such kind-hearted souls today.

I hope that the respectable persons who are adorning the dias and those among the audience and other intellectuals and religious heads will join hands and do their best to put an end to this disorder and prevent recurrence of such disparaging incidents, come what may. God is never happy with such incidents. The leaders present here may serve the people. God will be happy. Everything has been created to serve man. The mosques and mandirs too are meant for man. The animals do not worship in these places.

There is no guarantee of life or of getting together again, nor can it be said that so many persons would assemble again as they have assembled today. May be this talk touches the heart strings of some one and some others may join him in forming a caravan of noble-minded people who may change the present deplorable conditions in the country which are painful and shameful.